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Get the facts: About livestock exports

Why is there a need to export live animals overseas?

There are several reasons why Australia exports livestock overseas.

Developing countries throughout the Middle East and Asia rely on the trade of live animals for the essential supply of affordable meat. This is because many people do not have the luxury of home refrigeration, and supermarkets are inaccessible and unaffordable to those living in regional villages.

The supply of live animals is also important for religious and cultural reasons. In the Middle East traditions have grown around the slaughter of animals – including religious feasts and family celebrations. The purchase and ritual slaughter of live animals at the end of Ramadan is a fundamental pillar of the Qaran and the Middle Eastern culture.

Why can't the trade be replaced by the chilled meat trade?

Although Australia exports chilled meat to the same countries it supplies with live animals, there is strong demand for both products because they serve different needs.

If Australia ceased to supply livestock to the Middle East, the trade would not simply be replaced by the chilled meat trade. There is evidence that if Australia withdrew from the trade there would not be an increased trade in chilled meat. For example, in 2007, the demand for live animals in the Middle East will not be met by the supply of livestock from Australia due to drought and restricted shipping capacity. The gap between the demand and supply is not being filled by Australian boxed meat, but by live animals from Sudan, Somalia and Iran, which do not share Australia's commitment to animal welfare.

Which countries does Australia export livestock to?

Australian livestock are exported to 28 countries, primarily in the Middle East and Asia. In 2009 the top 10 live cattle export destinations were Indonesia (which takes more than 80% of annual exports), Israel, China, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Bahrain and Kuwait.

In 2009 the top 10 live sheep export destinations were Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Malaysia and Singapore. Australia also exports goats and dairy cattle. The main markets for dairy cattle are Mexico, Russian Federation, China, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Live goats are exported to Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei, Singapore and the Philippines.

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Where do Australia's livestock exports come from?

Livestock were exported from 18 separate Australian ports in 2009.

Cattle are mainly exported from the Port of Darwin in the Northern Territory and Broome and Wyndham in the north of Western Australia.

Sheep live exports are concentrated in Fremantle, Western Australia: 72% of sheep exports left via this port in 2009. Around 28% are shipped from Victoria and South Australia.

Dairy cattle exports are sourced primarily from Victorian producers and, to a lesser extent, from Western Australia.

Goat exports are mainly from Perth and Adelaide.

How many animals are exported?

In 2009, Australia exported 3.56 million sheep, 954,143 cattle and 97,261 goats.

What is the value to Australia of livestock exports?

The Australian livestock export industry is important to all Australians.

The industry is a major contributor to the Australian economy, contributing \$1.8 billion each year to Gross Domestic Product. Furthermore, the industry created export earnings of over \$831 million in each of the last five years. The livestock export industry employs nearly 13,000 Australians across 30 separate business types and the industry pays \$987 million a year in wages and salaries. The industry makes a huge contribution to rural and regional areas throughout Australia, with many of these jobs located in these areas. The industry plays a crucial role in underpinning the economic activity and social wellbeing of large slices of these areas, and in times of drought this contribution is all the more important in helping families and communities survive difficult times.

Source: <http://www.liveexportcare.com.au/GetTheFacts/AboutLivestockExports/>